

REMARKS

Applicants request reconsideration and allowance of the present application in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks.

Claims 1-8, 10-17, 19-26 are pending in the present application. Claims 1, 13, 14, 15 and 21 are the independent claims.

Claims 9 and 18 have been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer. Claims 1, 13-15, and 26 have been amended. No new matter is believed to have been added.

Initially, Applicants acknowledge with appreciation that claims 21-26 are allowed. In addition, claims 9, 14, and 18 were indicated as containing patentable subject matter and would be allowed if placed in independent form. Based on this indication, claim 14 has been rewritten in independent form, and is thus submitted to be allowable. Also based on this indication, claims 1 and 15 have been rewritten to include the features of claims 9 and 18, respectively, and are thus submitted to be allowable. Still further, independent claim 13 has been amended to recite a feature based on allowable claim 9, and is thus submitted to be allowable.

Claims 1-5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 15-17 and 19 stand rejected under U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,818,478 (Gibson). Claims 1, 2 and 12 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,792,818 (Eldridge et al.). Claims 1, 2 and 12 stand rejected under U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Eldridge et al. Claim 6 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Japanese Patent Publication JP 56-113470 (JP '470). Claim 13 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over pages 1-5 of the Specification, U.S. Patent No. 5,895,313 (Ikezaki et al.), and JP '470. All rejections are respectfully traversed.

In view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully submit that the independent claims patentably define the present invention over the citations of record. Further, the dependent claims should also be allowable for the same reasons as their respective base claims and further due to the additional features that they recite. Separate and individual consideration of the dependent claims is respectfully requested.

Applicants believe that the present Amendment is responsive to each of the points raised by the Examiner in the Official Action. However, if there are any formal matters remaining after this response, the Examiner is requested to telephone the undersigned to attend to such matters.

There being no further outstanding objections or rejections, it is submitted that the present application is in condition for allowance. An early action to that effect is courteously

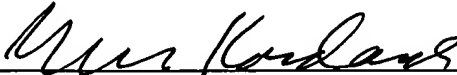
solicited.

If there are any additional fees associated with filing of this Amendment, please charge the same to our Deposit Account No. 19-3935.

Respectfully submitted,

STAAS & HALSEY LLP

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By: 
Michael E. Kondoudis
Registration No. 42,758

1201 New York Avenue, NW, Suite 700
Washington, D.C. 20005
Telephone: (202) 434-1500
Facsimile: (202) 434-1501